Husserl’s Crisis of the European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology

The Crisis of the European Sciences is Husserl’s last and most influential book, written in Nazi Germany where he was discriminated against as a Jew. It incisively identifies the urgent moral and existential crises of the age, and defends the relevance of philosophy at a time of both scientific progress and political barbarism. It is also a response to Heidegger, offering Husserl’s own approach to the problems of human finitude, history and culture. The Crisis introduces Husserl’s influential notion of the ‘life-world’ – the pregiven, familiar environment that includes both ‘nature’ and ‘culture’ – and offers the best introduction to his phenomenology as both method and philosophy. Dermot Moran’s rich and accessible introduction to the Crisis explains its intellectual and political context, its philosophical motivations and the themes that characterize it. His book will be invaluable for students and scholars of Husserl’s work and of phenomenology in general.

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For Loretta, Katie, Eoin and Hannah
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This book is a critical study of Edmund Husserl’s last work, *Crisis of the European Sciences* (partially published in 1936 and edited posthumously in 1954), a work universally acknowledged as an enduring masterpiece. The *Crisis* is one of the more successful of Husserl’s major works in terms of its philosophical range, depth and accessibility. To write it, he had to overcome not only recurrent illness and the trials of old age, but also personal discrimination and victimization at the hands of the National Socialist regime in Germany. As he himself acknowledged, the practice of philosophy is a calling, a ‘vocation’ (*Beruf*), and as such presents a demanding challenge to the way one lives and interprets one’s life. Writing this book has made me appreciate more and more Husserl’s earnest dedication to philosophy as a vocation and as a way of engaging reflectively with urgent problems concerning the future of our contemporary scientific culture and technologically shaped mode of living.

Husserl’s philosophical output was vast, and much of it consists of lecture notes and private research jottings that are still being edited and published in the Husserliana series (now more than forty volumes). As a consequence, Husserl scholarship is also vast and growing strongly. Any study of Husserl’s *Crisis of the European Sciences* must build on the work of previous scholars. Fortunately, Husserl has been exceptionally well served by successive generations of loyal and dedicated scholars, and by the editorial activities of the various Husserl Archives in Belgium, France, Germany and the United States, as well as by the research promulgated at the annual meetings of the Husserl Circle, founded in 1969, and in the journal *Husserl Studies*, founded in 1984. With regard to the *Crisis*, one has especially to acknowledge the original editorial work of Husserl’s assistant, Eugen Fink, as well
as that of Walter Biemel, the editor of Husserliana Volume vi and other Husserliana volumes.

I would like here to acknowledge gratefully the contribution of a number of Husserl scholars who in one way or another have assisted me. I am grateful to David Carr for discussions and for his lucid and fluid English translation of the main parts of the Crisis, which is the basis for this study. I have also benefited from consulting Gérard Granel’s elegant and free-flowing French translation. I have also to acknowledge other scholars who have recently written illuminatingly on the Crisis, in particular two monographs – James Dodd’s Crisis and Reflection: An Essay on Edmund Husserl’s Crisis of the European Sciences (2004) and Ernst Wolfgang Orth’s Edmund Husserls Krisis der europäischen Wisenschaften und die transzendentale Phänomenologie: Vernunft und Kultur (1999) – as well as two recent collections of essays: Jean-Claude Gens, ed., La Krisis de Husserl: Approches contemporaines (2008), and David Hyder and Hans-Jörg Rheinberger, eds., Science and the Life-World: Essays on Husserl’s ‘Crisis of European Sciences’ (2010). Clearly, interest in Husserl’s Crisis continues to grow, and I hope this book will continue the debate concerning the meaning of Husserl’s last work.

I want to thank the Husserl Archief of the Katholieke Universiteit Leuven, Belgium, its current director, Ullrich Melle, and researchers Thomas Vongehr and Filip Mattens, for their assistance. I record my thanks here also to those with whom I have had discussions concerning the Crisis, especially Jocelyn Benoist, John Brough, David Carr, Steven Galt Crowell, John J. Drummond, Lester Embree, Jean-Claude Gens, George Heffernan, Elmar Holenstein, Burt Hopkins, Hanne Jacobs, Leonard Lawlor, Sebastian Luft, Jeff Malpas, Tom Nonen, Hans-Rainer Sepp, Ted Toadvine, Nicolas de Warren and Dan Zahavi. Special thanks go to Lubica Učník and Ivan Chvatík for providing me with material on Husserl’s student Jan Patočka. I would also like to thank Sara Heinämäa for inviting me to discuss the Crisis at a seminar at the Helsinki Collegium for Advanced Studies, Helsinki, Finland, in May 2010, and I thank the participants for their comments, especially Jussi Backman, Mirja Hartimo, Tim Miettinen, Simo Pulkkinen and Joona Taipale. I also want specially to thank Professors Cheung Chan-Fai, Kwan Tze-Wan and Lau Kwok-Ying for inviting me to participate in the Fourth International Masterclass
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Last, but not least, I would like to thank my family for their support, especially my wife, Loretta, and our three children, Katie, Eoin and Hannah, and of course, our new sheepdog, Charlie.
**Abbreviations**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Work Description</th>
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<tr>
<td>CM</td>
<td>Husserl, <em>Cartesianische Meditationen</em>, Hua i (<em>Cartesian Meditations</em>, trans. D. Cairns)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Chronik</td>
<td>Husserl-Chronik: Denk- und Lebensweg Edmund Husserls, ed. K. Schuhmann</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DR</td>
<td>Husserl, <em>Ding und Raum</em>, Hua xvi (<em>Thing and Space: Lectures of 1907</em>, trans. R. Rojcewicz)</td>
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<tr>
<td>GA</td>
<td>Heidegger, <em>Gesamtausgabe</em></td>
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**List of abbreviations**

**Hua**  
Husserliana series, Edmund Husserl Gesammelte Werke.

**Ideas i**  

**Ideas ii**  

**Ideas iii**  

**IP**  

**K**  
Husserl, *Die Krisis der europäischen Wissenschaften und die transzendentale Phänomenologie*, ed. W. Biemel, Hua vi

**KITP**  

**LU**  

**Materialen viii**  

**OG**  
List of abbreviations

PES Brentano, Psychologie vom empirischen Standpunkt (Psychology from an Empirical Standpoint, trans. A.C. Rancurello, D.B. Terrell and L.L. McAlister)


PL Husserl, Pariser Vorträge, Hua i (Paris Lectures, trans. P. Koestenbaum)

PP Merleau-Ponty, Phénoméologie de la perception, 1945 (Phenomenology of Perception, trans. C. Smith)


PRS Husserl, Philosophie als strenge Wissenschaft, Hua xxv (‘Philosophy as Rigorous Science’, trans. M. Brainard)

SZ Heidegger, Sein und Zeit, 1927 (Being and Time, trans. J. Macquarrie and E. Robinson)


In general, citations from Husserl will give the English translation pagination (if any) followed by the Husserliana volume number and German pagination. Thus, for the Crisis the reference will be ‘C’ followed by the page number of the Carr translation (where available) followed by ‘K’ for Hua vi and the page number there, e.g. ‘C 3; K 1’). In the case of Ideas i, the German pagination will be that of the first edition of 1913, printed in the margin of the Husserliana edition. For the Logical Investigations, the volume number of the English translation will be indicated in bold, e.g. I or II.